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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

BOOKS.

[Books relating to folk-lore or mythology will receive notice, provided that a copy be sent to the editors of this Journal. Such copy may be addressed to the care of the publishers directly, or to the General Editor.]

MASTER VIRGIL. The author of the *Æneid* as he seemed in the Middle Ages. A series of studies by J. S. TUNISON. Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co. 1888. 8vo, pp. vii., 230.

The myth of Virgil as developed during the Middle Ages affords one of the most interesting examples of the rise and growth of a legend within comparatively recent times, and about a perfectly well-known historic character, whose individuality was at no time wholly obscured. The rôle attributed to the great poet by mediæval fancy was twofold — prophet and magician. The former can be easily explained by the fourth eclogue, the latter is more difficult to understand and has been investigated at various times by many scholars. In 1872 Professor Comparetti published his remarkable work on “Virgil in the Middle Ages,” in which he gave an exhaustive history of the vicissitudes of the poet’s fame during that period among the learned and the unlearned. The author was careful to distinguish between literary and popular tradition, and attributed the fame of Virgil as a magician to the influence of Neapolitan local traditions. Comparetti’s views have generally been received without dispute, although more than one German scholar has impugned his conclusions.

No systematic attack upon Comparetti’s theory has, however, appeared until now, and it is highly creditable to American scholarship that it should appear in this country. Mr. Tunison has thrown the results of his studies into nine chapters or essays in which he treats of Virgil and the Devil, Virgil in literary tradition, Virgil’s book of magic, Virgil the man of science, Virgil the Savior of Rome, Virgil the lover, Virgil in later tradition; and explains in a prefatory essay how the book came to be written.

Mr. Tunison’s studies soon convinced him that the legends of Virgil were literary rather than popular, and were due not to Neapolitan local traditions, but to the tendency of the Middle Ages to attribute a magical character to great learning. There was also much in Virgil’s works to encourage this latter notion, while his reputation as a prophet of Christ was early established by his fourth eclogue.

We have not space to show how Mr. Tunison has taken up the various phases of Virgil’s character and shown in them the relation between his contemporaries and early critics and the various legends. The author has, we think, clearly proved his theory and at the same time has produced a most readable and interesting book. He has classified and arranged all the numerous legends relating to Virgil and presented them in an attractive form while making a solid contribution to the history of myth. We can very heartily commend “Master Virgil” to our readers as both a scholarly and entertaining work.

T. F. C.